

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE  
AT GREENEVILLE**

JOHN ALEX KEGLEY,

Plaintiff,

v.

SULLIVAN COUNTY CRIMINAL  
COURT and JAMES FRANKLIN  
GOODWIN,

Defendants.

No. 2:24-CV-034-KAC-CRW

**MEMORANDUM AND ORDER**

Plaintiff, an inmate in the Sullivan County Detention Center, has filed (1) a complaint for violation of 42 U.S.C. § 1983 [Doc. 1] and (2) a motion for leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* [Doc. 4]. For the reasons set forth below, the Court **GRANTS** Plaintiff's motion for leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* [Doc. 4] and **DISMISSES** this action because Plaintiff's Complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted under Section 1983.

**I. MOTION TO PROCEED *IN FORMA PAUPERIS***

Under the Prison Litigation Reform Act ("PLRA"), a prisoner bringing a civil action may apply for permission to file suit without prepaying the filing fee. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a). It appears from Plaintiff's motion for leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* [Doc. 4] that he cannot pay the filing fee in one lump sum. Accordingly, under 28 U.S.C. § 1915, the Court **GRANTS** the Motion [Doc. 4].

Plaintiff is **ASSESSED** the civil filing fee of \$350.00. The Court **DIRECTS** the custodian of Plaintiff's inmate trust account to submit to the Clerk, U.S. District Court, 220 West Depot Street, Greeneville, Tennessee 37743, as an initial partial payment, whichever is the greater of: (a)

twenty percent (20%) of the average monthly deposits to Plaintiff's inmate trust account; or (b) twenty percent (20%) of the average monthly balance in his inmate trust account for the six-month period preceding the filing of the complaint. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1)(A) and (B). Thereafter, the custodian of Plaintiff's inmate trust account is directed to submit twenty percent (20%) of Plaintiff's preceding monthly income (or income credited to Plaintiff's trust account for the preceding month), but only when such monthly income exceeds ten dollars (\$10.00), until the full filing fee of three hundred fifty dollars (\$350.00) as authorized under 28 U.S.C. § 1914(a) has been paid to the Clerk. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2).

To ensure compliance with this fee-collection procedure, the Court **DIRECTS** the Clerk to mail a copy of this Memorandum and Order to the custodian of inmate accounts at the institution where Plaintiff is now confined. The Court also **DIRECTS** the Clerk to furnish a copy of this Memorandum and Order to the Court's financial deputy. This Memorandum and Order shall be placed in Plaintiff's prison file and follow him if he is transferred to another correctional institution.

## **II. COMPLAINT SCREENING**

### **A. Screening Standard**

Under the PLRA, a district court must screen a prisoner complaint and *sua sponte* dismiss any claims that are frivolous or malicious, fail to state a claim for relief, or are against a defendant who is immune. *See, e.g.*, 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B) and 1915A; *Benson v. O'Brian*, 179 F.3d 1014 (6th Cir. 1999). The dismissal standard articulated by the Supreme Court in *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662 (2009) and *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544 (2007) "governs dismissals for failure state a claim under [28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B) and 1915A] because the relevant statutory language tracks the language in Rule 12(b)(6)" of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. *Hill v.*

*Lappin*, 630 F.3d 468, 470-71 (6th Cir. 2010). Thus, to survive an initial review under the PLRA, a complaint “must contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to ‘state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.’” *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678 (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 570).

Allegations that give rise to a mere possibility that a plaintiff might later establish undisclosed facts supporting recovery are not well-pled and do not state a plausible claim. *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555, 570. Further, formulaic and conclusory recitations of the elements of a claim that are not supported by specific facts are insufficient to state a plausible claim for relief. *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 681. However, the Supreme Court has instructed that courts should liberally construe pro se pleadings filed in civil rights cases and hold them to a less stringent standard than “formal pleadings drafted by lawyers.” *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972).

## **B. Analysis**

In his Complaint, Plaintiff asserts that because one of his state court sentences was to be served ““coterminous”” with a federal sentence for the same offense and that federal sentence has expired, the state court “case . . . should be vacated” [Doc. 1 at 3-4]. As relief, Plaintiff seeks correction of his state court sentence and argues that he should only be serving a four-year sentence for a separate state court case [*Id.* at 5].

While Plaintiff’s Complaint is not clear, it appears that he seeks to challenge and/or vacate a state court sentence that he is currently serving. However, the exclusive federal remedy for a prisoner to challenge the fact or duration of his confinement is a writ of habeas corpus. *See Muhammad v. Close*, 540 U.S. 749, 750 (2004) (citing *Preiser v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 475, 500 (1973)). Accordingly, Plaintiff’s claim challenging his state court sentence is not cognizable under Section 1983, and the Court **DISMISSES** his Complaint.

### III. CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth above:

1. The Court **GRANTED** Plaintiff's motion for leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* [Doc. 4];
2. The Court **ASSESSED** Plaintiff the civil filing fee of \$350.00;
3. The Court **DIRECTED** the custodian of Plaintiff's inmate trust account to submit the filing fee to the Clerk in the manner set for above;
4. The Court **DIRECTED** the Clerk to provide a copy of this Memorandum and Order to the custodian of inmate accounts at the institution where Plaintiff is now confined and to the Court's financial deputy;
5. Even liberally construing the Complaint in favor of Plaintiff, it fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted under Section 1983. Accordingly, the Court **DISMISSES** this action under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B) and 1915A.

Further, the Court **CERTIFIES** that any appeal from this action would not be taken in good faith and would be totally frivolous. *See* Fed. R. App. P. 24. Should Plaintiff file a notice of appeal, he is **DENIED** leave to appeal *in forma pauperis*. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3); Fed. R. App. P. 24. An appropriate judgment shall enter.

**SO ORDERED.**

**ENTER:**

/s/ Katherine A. Crytzer  
KATHERINE A. CRYTZER  
United States District Judge